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ON ENOCH'S "WALKING WITH GOD," AND CONSEQUENT TRANSLATION TO HEAVEN.

A Sermon,

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Genesis v. 24.—"*And Enoch walked with God; and, he was not; for God took him.*"

NOTHING is more common in Holy Scripture, than to express the course of a religious life, by the phrase of "walking with God," or, "before God." And we find by this example of it, that such manner of speaking was used very early.

Enoch, the seventh from Adam, has this character, that he "walked with God." He was by descent, of the pious line of Seth: and prophesied, or spake against the wickedness which the vicious line of Cain had brought in: as is recorded by St. Jude.

The whole scriptural account of him is short; but enough is told us, to prove, that he was a person of most exemplary piety: and that he stands recorded as a monument to all ages, of God's favourable kindness towards those who faithfully serve him: for a very singular mark of the highest approbation was granted to him. To use the words of St. Paul, "he was translated, that he should not see" or suffer, "death." He was suddenly removed from the earth, without sickness, pain, or any of the distressing circumstances attending dissolution, but was translated into a better state with God in heaven.

This happened about a thousand years after the creation; when the world was overspread with all manner of wickedness;

and men, being corrupted by ease and luxury, gave themselves up "to commit iniquity with greediness."

Into such degrees of impiety may mankind fall, if they throw off their dependence upon their Creator, and live as it were "without God in the world," giving themselves up to the violence of their passions, and the gratification of their depraved inclinations. But God, who has in every age afforded some extraordinary testimony of himself and his providence: was pleased, in this instance, to order things so, that the men even of a wicked generation could not but be convinced that there was another world, by seeing so excellent and pious a person as Enoch was, taken from them in so extraordinary a manner; and yet, this event, singular as it was, had but very little influence upon that degenerate age, as the sacred history informs us: for the wickedness of men soon increased to such a degree, that (as it is expressed in the strong figurative language of scripture) God "repented that he had made them."

But, however, little attention the impious and profane men of *that* age paid to the translation of Enoch, *we* may well consider it as graciously designed by Almighty God, to support and comfort good men in all ages, with the hope of a better life after death.

As death was then but newly brought into the world, with respect to the human race, and as yet there had been but few instances of it, this early translation of the holy patriarch, was a very seasonable relief to curious and thoughtful minds, against the fear of death, and very proper to give them the hope of some happier state, so far as they imitated the piety and obedience of this good man.*

In discoursing further on this subject, I intend,

First—To consider the character and conduct of Enoch as "walking with God," specifying some particulars implied in it, and

* Before the flood, the life of man was greatly protracted beyond its present most extended period. Adam being the first who died a *natural* death. The death of Abel, Adam's second son, was a *violent* not a *natural* death. Seth, his third son died, aged 912 years, and Methuselah, the son of Enoch, at the age of 969. Noah lived after the flood, 350 years, and died aged 950 years; since which period, the limit of human life has gradually decreased.

Secondly—To recommend his character to your imitation.

1st. I am to consider the character and conduct of Enoch, and to mention some particulars implied in it.

The character here given of him is, that he "walked with God"—he had a great and solemn sense of God's power, presence, wisdom and goodness, and this influenced and governed his whole conduct and conversation. He is said in scripture, to have been "a preacher of righteousness," protesting against the impiety and profligacy of the world.

To *come to God*, signifies in the Hebrew or Jewish language, *making a profession of religion*, or resolving to lead a godly, righteous, and sober life, in obedience to God's holy laws, and in expectation of his great and glorious reward in another world: and to "walk with God" signifies to continue and *persevere* in that religious practice, whereof "coming to God" is the beginning or entrance. Thus we are told "Noah was a just man and perfect," or upright, "and Noah walked with God."—Thus again, "Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him and keep his commandments, and obey his voice"—where it is evident, that by "walking with God" is signified a life of true godliness, or, in general, a life of true piety, and of uniform obedience to the laws of God.

But, to be more particular, "to walk with God" implies and includes in it, a firm belief and persuasion, that he *is*,—that he is an eternal and infinite Being, one who possesses all perfections—almighty in power, of boundless goodness, wisdom and mercy; who is the creator of all things, himself derived from none; but *necessarily* existing—one who is everywhere present, beholding the evil and the good; and one who loveth the righteous, but is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity—even that Being who as he made the world by his power, preserves and governs it by his goodness and wisdom—and will judge its inhabitants in justice, truth, and mercy—a being supreme, awful and amiable, whose goodness and mercy every living creature partakes of. This is to think and to believe rightly of the Divine Being.

But this belief and persuasion must not be a bare *notion*,

floating in the *head*, without affecting the *heart*, or influencing the life and manners—for what can it signify to *believe* in God, while yet we live as if there were no God.

To "walk with God" is to endeavour to please him in all things, and carefully to avoid whatever we may fear would dishonour or displease him.

To "walk with God" implies, that on the ground of *reconciliation*, through a Mediator, we constantly regard him as a most gracious *Father* and *Friend*—that we think of him as an ever present God, and that we pour out our hearts before him in prayer and praise, with the humblest reverence and adoration.

To "walk with God" implies that we begin every day with a serious and thankful acknowledgment of our entire dependence upon him, and with a grateful remembrance of his mercy and goodness towards us, in protecting us from the perils and dangers of the past night, at the same time imploring his continued protection during the succeeding day. And at night, when we retire to rest, considering that as we then go to our *bed*, we shall one day go to our *grave;* we should habitually commend ourselves to his paternal care and watchful providence over us, during the hours of unconscious existence, and by fervent devotion, increase our preparation for the awful inevitable hour of death, and the still more *awful* day of judgment.

The succession of day and night is wisely adapted to such creatures as we are; and is an unquestionable proof of God's provident care of us. Our frame is so delicately, so wonderfully constructed, that constant labour would waste the spirits, destroy the constitution, and render life a burden: to prevent which our gracious heavenly Parent withdraws from us the light of the sun, and spreads over us the shades of night; this naturally puts a stop to our labours, and disposes us for that repose, which renews our strength, and enables us to return with fresh vigour to the exercise of our different professions and employments. Does a gracious God protect us when, lulled in the arms of sleep, we cannot protect ourselves? Does the Father of Mercies renew to us every morning our health, our reason, and all our active powers? What then can be more reasonable,

than that we should, on our waking in the morning, to health and life, express our warmest gratitude, and offer up our most thankful acknowledgments to our heavenly Protector.

He who "walketh with God" will also remember the *Sabbath day*, to keep it holy. The Creator of all ordained, in great mercy, that the seventh day should be a day of refreshment for the minds and bodies of men, from all the usual avocations of life, as well as of rest to the whole brute creation. But if God appointed the seventh day, as a day of rest from labour, he certainly never intended it as a day of idle and ensnaring diversions, or of slothful indolence, which dissipate reflection, and unfit the mind for every thing which is serious;—No, we are solemnly told that God *sanctified* the seventh day, *i. e.* he separated *that* day from the common uses of the *other* days of the week, and intended it to be observed as a day, "holy unto the Lord," and employed in those services which have immediate reference to his worship. The rest, therefore, which God enjoined on the Sabbath day, was not for a mere cessation from the *secular* concerns of life, or from mere amusements, but such a cessation from the affairs of the world, as would give us leisure for the special services of *religion;* and it is unquestionably evident, that were public instruction and public worship to be laid aside, men would sink into ignorance and brutality. Of so much importance is it to keep *holy* the Sabbath day.

Remember the strictness and solemnity with which it was observed by the Jews, the chosen people of God, and that at his *special command.*

As to the *Christian Sabbath*, or Day of Rest, it hath a great and glorious event to be commemorated on it, which equally displays the manifold wisdom, the great power, and the amazing riches of the mercy and grace of God. For the work of *redemption* was finished on that day, by the glorious resurrection of the Son of God. So that this day, or as it is properly called *the Lord's day*, is the memorial both of the *old* or material, and of the *new* or spiritual creation—the day in which we ought to recollect the wonderful works of God, and the day in which we should celebrate the praises of God, for sending his *only* Son into our

world, to destroy the works of the devil, and to redeem and recover *us* from all iniquity, by teaching us both by his precepts and example to "deny," or repress, "all ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world,"—the day in which we should devoutly call to mind, that "for us men and for *our* salvation, the Lord Jesus came down from heaven;" whereby, "the day-spring from on high, hath visited us;" and at the same time, with gratitude and joy to confess, that our gracious God hath raised us by the death and resurrection of his Son to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for all his *faithful* disciples.

And now, brethren, is it not proper that these grand transactions should be thus *publicly* remembered by us, especially as Almighty God hath set a day apart for it? Is not a God of infinite perfection, worthy of our highest veneration and reverence? Is it reasonable that the public honour of the eternal God, who is the creator of the wide extended universe, and that his blessed and only Son, the redeemer of sinful men, should be neglected, for *our* private concerns, or trifling amusements? Should not the Universal Parent and Bountiful Benefactor, be confessed and adored in the most *public* manner? Should not the favours of his providence and goodness be solemnly acknowledged, with the warmest gratitude and thankfulness? Should not the wonders of *redemption* cause us to rejoice continually in Christ the Saviour?

A deep conviction of these infinitely important truths, will induce every one who "walks with God" to praise him in his holy temple, and exalt him in the congregation of his people, by devotional exercises, and devotional deportment, or such deportment as will clearly indicate the *object* of our assembling there. Such as the expressive attitude of *kneeling* at the time of *prayer*, which Jesus Christ and his apostles always did, and of making the appointed *responses* in an *audible* voice—without which the beauty and energy, in fact the *efficacy* of our admirable form of worship, are entirely suppressed—it being originally designed to be a mutual service between the priest and the people.

St. Chrysostom tells us, that in his Church in Constantinople, when the people made the responses, and said Amen, it was like a clap of thunder.

How *greatly* would it add to the dignity and solemnity of our public worship, and increase the ardour of devotion, if every individual would utter the *responses as required*, in an *audible* voice!

But farther—the man who "walks with God," cheerfully obeys all his commands, calmly submits to his divine will, and contentedly suffers whatever he is pleased to inflict upon him, with the pious ejaculation of his suffering Saviour, "Father, not *my* will but *thine* be done!" firmly believing it to be inflicted by infinite wisdom and goodness.

In the *darkest* administration of Divine Providence, the man who "walks with God"—and more especially the true *Christian*, though overshadowed by the blackest cloud of adversity, will, with the eye of *faith* clearly discern a brilliant and animating *rainbow of promise*, and will hear the consolatory whispers of hope—"Why art thou so full of heaviness, and why art thou so disquieted within me? Oh! put thy trust in God, for thou shalt yet give him thanks for the help of his countenance."

He fears beyond all things to offend his God; and if at any time he hath been so unhappy, he endeavours to be reconciled by truly humbling himself, and by walking thenceforward, according to his holy laws. He is careful not to be wanting in any of those duties of justice and love, which he owes to his *neighbour*. He defrauds none; he oppresses none. He robs no man of his good name by slander and defamation. He endeavours to preserve peace with all men, and does unto others as he would wish them to do unto him, endeavouring to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men. In all the relations of life, whether as a public or private citizen—whether as a husband, a parent, or a child, a master, or a servant, a friend, or a neighbour, he discharges *every duty* with fidelity, diligence, and love. In a word he gives no offence in any thing, but as he has opportunity and ability, is useful, does good, is gentle and courteous unto all men.

Neither is he deficient in his duty to *himself.* It is his study to be temperate in all things—he governs his passions and restrains his appetites by the dictates of *reason,* and the precepts of *religion;* he honours God's holy name and profanes it not by impious oaths or horrid imprecations, being sensible that the language of *hell* never can consist with a "conversation in heaven."—Does Satan assail him, he bravely resists him, "steadfast in the faith." Do his own heart's lusts tempt him to do evil?—his language is,—"How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against my God!" Do sinners entice him?—he consents not, but boldly rebukes them in the words of the pious Psalmist, —"Away from me ye wicked, I *will* keep the commandments of my God." This conduct he pursues, and in this he perseveres. He would not be diverted from it, by any consideration that this world could afford him. He serves not God with an unsteady, fluctuating mind—he is sensible that the divine favour is not to be obtained, by a "goodness that passeth away like the morning cloud, and the early dew," and therefore, by a patient *continuance* in well-doing, he seeks for glory and honour, and immortality—he "holds fast the profession" and practice, "of his faith without wavering," and copying the example of St. Paul, "This one thing he does, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forward to the things which are before, he presses toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."

Such, my brethren, is the character of the man who "walks with God."

Secondly, Let me request a few minutes more of your time, while, in the way of affectionate conclusion, I now recommend as was proposed, this character to your most serious attention and active imitation.

May I then ask you, Is it not a desirable character? Has it not recommendation enough to engage our ready choice, as rational, and consequently responsible beings, and to *persuade* us to imitate it. In so doing, peace of conscience would cheer us through all the changing scenes of this world, and the peace of God would be with us at the end thereof.

When we have outlived the levity of youth—when we have lost our relish for the entertainments of life—when age steals upon us, and leads us to the brink of the grave—then, to reflect that we have "walked with God," during our temporal pilgrimage, will yield a rich consolation—it will dissipate the terrors of death, and render our passage through his dreary confines safe and unalarming, enabling us to exult with the royal psalmist, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou, O God, art with me; thy rod and thy staff will comfort me,"—and with the holy apostle, "Oh! Death, where is thy sting? Oh! Grave, where is thy victory?"

And what should prevent *us* from walking as Enoch did? Have we not the same *hope* to influence us? Have we not the same (nay, infinitely greater) *reward* in substance to encourage us? Have we not the same *Judge* to answer to that *he* had? Have we not the same gracious God to assist, protect and strengthen us, that *he* had? Besides,—have we not the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and thereby infinitely clearer light, to direct us how to "walk with God," than he had? Had not Enoch sons and daughters, and consequently a family to provide for, and was he not of course engaged in the business and cares of this world, as other men are? Why then should not a regard to God, and the infinitely important concerns of another life, the salvation of our immortal souls, keep us as unspotted from the world as it did Enoch? "If we do well, shall we not be accepted," and rewarded as he was?—not indeed by being immediately translated to heaven, but by being in due time partakers of that life and immortality which have been brought to light by the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

It is recorded of *Bacon*, the celebrated English sculptor, that some time before his death he dictated his own *epitaph*, which was afterwards inscribed on his tombstone. It was this, "What I was as an *artist* appeared to me something very great whilst I lived,—but what I really was, as a believer in Jesus Christ, is the only thing of importance to me *now*."

There were only two persons translated, without suffering death, into a better world—one *before* the giving of the law—Enoch: the other *after* it—Elijah; and both those instances were intended for the admonition and instruction of a wicked and corrupt people; and that they might maintain a sense of God, and of another world. But *now*, since Jesus Christ has by his doctrine and by his resurrection, given such clear proof of a future life, there is no need that the world should any longer be admonished by such extraordinary means. Jesus Christ himself was not translated into heaven, till *after* his death and resurrection; in all things going before us, and showing us by his example, not only what our duty is, but likewise what our reward shall be, and in what manner it shall be given; that we must die, rise again, and if we have "walked with God," through human life, ascend into the paradise of God.

And now, brethren, having this hope, should we not purify ourselves from all sinful desires and actions, striving to acquire holiness in the fear of God: as on the right use and improvement of the short space of time allotted us here on earth, depends our happiness through the ages of eternity. Much of this time we have already misspent—and how much or how little may yet remain to any of us, God only knows. Should not this certainty press home upon our *consciences*, the apostle's exhortation—"Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness?" What examples of piety and integrity—what patterns of good disposition, of meekness, gentleness, mildness and sweetness of temper, of benevolence and of charity, "abounding in all those fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, to the praise and glory of God." For, said he himself, "by their fruits shall ye know my disciples;" and his holy apostle, "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his."

After what has been said, I now feel it to be my duty as one of your spiritual pastors, and as such bearing a commission from the Lord Jesus Christ, whose disciples you profess yourselves to be, in the name and by the authority of Almighty God—as "a watchman upon the walls of Zion,"—I now solemnly

call upon each individual in this assembly, seriously to ask himself or herself, and attentively to listen to the dictates of *conscience*,—am I "walking with God?"—Do I conform to the precepts of the *religion* I profess, and to the *ordinances* which its divine Author appointed for my growth in grace and preparation for admission into his heavenly kingdom? Do I search the scriptures to enable me to know and to do the will of God? Am I in the habitual practice of fervent prayer, in God's holy temple, with my family, and in private devotional exercises? Do I frequently receive the blessed sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which he so positively enjoined on *all* his professing disciples, in grateful remembrance of his atonement for them, and as a channel for the influence and aid of the Holy Spirit? Do I do unto others as I would wish them to do unto me? Do I uniformly consider myself under the immediate inspection of God's omnipresence, and regulate my thoughts, words, and actions thereby? If not—I am *not* "walking with God," and my religion or profession of it, is a mere *lifeless formality*—absolute hypocrisy. What then *can* be my hopes of salvation? I am daily drawing nearer to my grave, where there can be no repentance—and I may be *now* upon the very *brink* of it, and therefore,

"When rising from the bed of death,
O'erwhelmed with guilt and fear,
I see my Maker (and my judge) face to face,
Oh! how shall I appear!"

Let me then henceforth resolve to see and to "follow those things which belong to my eternal peace and happiness, before they are for ever hidden from mine eyes," and the gate of the Paradise of God be for ever shut against me.

But brethren, if *conscience* affords a favourable answer, and testifies that each of you has given your heart to God, and that you are endeavouring to "walk in all the commandments and the ordinances of the Lord blameless," happy are you! *Death* will prove to you a welcome messenger, and the *grave* the safe and certain path which will lead you to the land of promise—

the heavenly Canaan, on entering which you will be received by your Saviour and your Judge with the exhilarating address, —"Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

Now to God the Father, &c.

WALKING WITH GOD, BY FAITH.

Rise, O my soul, pursue the path
By ancient heroes trod:
Ambitious view those holy men
Who *liv'd*, and "walk'd with God."

Tho' gone, they speak in reason's ear,
And in example live;
Their faith and hope, and mighty deeds,
Still fresh instruction give.

'Twas thro' the Lamb's most precious blood,
They conquer'd every foe;
And to his power, and matchless grace,
Their crowns, and honours owe.

Lord may I ever keep in view
The patterns thou hast given;
And ne'er forsake the blessed road,
Which led them safe to heaven.

When Faith presents the Saviour's death,
And whispers, "this is mine:"
Sweetly my rising hours advance,
And peacefully decline.

Let *outward* things go as they will,
On Thee I cast my care;
But let me reign with thee in heav'n,
Tho' most unworthy here.

Faith in thy love shall sweeten death,
And smooth each thorny way,
Smile on me, blessed Jesus—then,
I shall not wish to stay.